



Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs *Good News*



Volume 3 Issue 1

Welcome to Good News. This Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) newsletter highlights the accomplishments and sharing activities at both the local and national levels.

Military Health System Senior Leadership Holds Second Annual Remembrance Ceremony for Fallen Military Medical Personnel

On March 16, 2010, families of fallen military medical personnel gathered at Arlington National Cemetery to remember their loved ones who died during combat operations in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

“We gather together certainly to recognize their courage and sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice, on the battlefield. Yet we also are here to acknowledge our own grief and the enduring loss felt by their families,” said Charles Rice, M.D., the senior medical official for the Department of Defense, and host of the event. “These medical service members – medics, corpsmen, nurses, doctors – gave their lives in order to save lives.”

The ceremony included a presentation of colors by the Joint Armed Forces Service Color Guard, a wreath laying, and a playing of Taps. Featured guests included Vice Admiral Adam Robinson, Surgeon General of the Navy; Rear Admiral David Jay Smith, Joint Staff Surgeon, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Major General Deborah Wheeling, Deputy Surgeon General of the Army National Guard; and Mrs. Lee Woodruff, author and co-founder of The Bob Woodruff Foundation, ReMind.org.

“Military medical personnel have been on the battlefield saving lives throughout history,” said Rice. He added “To say that these heroes understood the risks of war is a simple fact. They volunteered to serve their fellow Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine as a caregiver. They also delivered life-saving care to our allies, civilians and – not infrequently – wounded enemy combatants. There are men and women alive today, here in the U.S. and overseas, who owe their lives to the heroism of those we are honoring today.”

“We are humbled by the sacrifice of our fellow healers; we are thankful to their families for the too brief time that their loved ones served with us; and we are obligated to never forget what they have done,” concluded Rice. “This ceremony honors their service to us all.”

Battlefield Medical Records Assist VA Staff with Service Member's Recovery

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is the weapon of choice by enemy forces in Southwest Asia. In December 2009, an IED detonation in Afghanistan left an Army major with injuries to the face and multiple fractures throughout his body.

The soldier was medically evacuated to Camp Lacy at Bagram Air Field, where he underwent surgical procedures for his injuries. Clinicians with the 455th Expeditionary Medical Group and others digitally documented his care in computer systems fielded by the U.S. Army's Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care (MC4) program.

After a short stay at Camp Lacy, the patient received follow-up care at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. On Christmas Eve, he boarded a plane bound for the U.S. for further recovery and to reunite with his family.

As he crossed the Atlantic Ocean, the staff at the North Chicago VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Illinois prepared for his arrival by reviewing his electronic battlefield medical records. Hours before the Soldier arrived at the stateside treatment facility, physicians had reviewed a full account of his medical history.

"As soon as we got the call, we were able to generate a medical record for him in VistA Web, where his physician was also able to view all of his remote medical records from AHLTA," said Bonnie Munkacsy, North Chicago VAMC transfer coordinator. "This made all the difference with the speed and coordination of his care."

Dr. Frank Maldonado, associate chief of staff for clinical affairs at the North Chicago VAMC added, "Our VA and DoD electronic medical records systems work extraordinarily well in situations like this. By reviewing the medical record before the patient arrived we were able to determine his allergies, medications, baseline labs, X-rays performed and review of progress notes including operative reports. This saved the patient lots of unnecessary tests and saved time for staff in determining a plan of care."

The information exchange was made possible via a data interface between the DoD's AHLTA and the VA's VistA systems - the Bi-directional Health Information Exchange (BHIE). Maldonado credits the electronic medical records (EMRs) systems in place to making the time-critical transition of service members possible. "It's safe to say that that without the EMRs, we would not have been able to prepare for the major's arrival in the manner in which we did."

inTransition Now Available for Service Members in Mental Health Treatment

Maintaining psychological health is important. Oftentimes during treatment, service members receive new orders, choose to separate from the military, or must retire as a result of an injury related or unrelated to battle.

inTransition helps transition mental health treatment for service members after they move. To begin, members can call toll-free 1-800-424-7877 (continental United States including Alaska and Hawaii); 1-800-424-4685 (outside the United States); or 1-314-387-4700 (collect outside the United States). Their current mental health provider may also contact inTransition if desired.

Once the provider or member calls, the service member will be assigned a Transition Support Coach (TSC) who will coach them one-on-one by phone as they go through transition. These coaches are licensed, master's-level behavioral health clinicians specially trained and skilled in understanding today's military culture. They will help connect service members with their new mental health provider and empower them with tools to continue making healthy life choices.

TSCs will offer support through motivational consultation and action planning. They will provide detailed information on how to successfully change providers, assist with referrals, and follow-up with new providers to ensure continuity of care. They will also provide information on community resources, support groups, and other resources available at the service member's new locale. In addition, coaches will have the knowledge to assist service members who may be transitioning their mental health care to the VA.

Additional information can be found at the inTransition Web site at www.health.mil/inTransition.

For questions please contact the appropriate point of contact below.

Robert D. Slough

Army Medical Department DoD/VA
Healthcare Resources Sharing Program
703.681.2910
Robert.d.Slough@amedd.army.mil

Ms. Betty Ruschmeier

Director, DoD Coordination Office
Veterans Health Administration
202-461-6534
Elizabeth.Ruschmeier@va.gov

Ms. Tamara L. Rollins

DoD/VA Program Manager
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
202-762-3520
Tamara.Rollins@med.navy.mil

Ms. Maura Brady

Communications Analyst
DoD/VA Program Coordination Office
TRICARE Management Activity/Health Affairs
Department of Defense
703-681-4258
maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil

Ms. Debra Irwin, DAFC

Chief, DoD/VA Resource Sharing
Deputy Director, Medical Support Panel
AFMSA/SG3S
703-558-6658
debra.irwin@pentagon.af.mil

If you have any good news stories and or accomplishments from your local teams, please send them to Maura Brady at maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil and your stories may be included in a future issue of the newsletter.

To receive copies of the Good News letter, you can subscribe to the MHS website for automatic blog updates at <https://service.govdelivery.com/service/user.html?code=USMHS> .

All Good News letters can also be found on the DVPCO website at <http://www.tricare.mil/DVPCO/features.cfm>